

<https://www.veteransforpeace.org/our-work/position-statements/veterans-call-resist-us-coup-venezuela>

Veterans Call to Resist U.S. Coup in Venezuela

Veterans For Peace is outraged at the unfolding coup d'état in Venezuela, which is [clearly being orchestrated by the U.S. government](#). Two hundred years of blatant U.S. intervention in Latin America must come to an end. Veterans For Peace was founded in 1985, in part prompted by the U.S.-backed “contra” war in Nicaragua, and U.S. support for the rightwing government in the bloody civil war in neighboring El Salvador. We did not want to see another Vietnam War in Central America.

Years of increasingly crippling U.S. sanctions have succeeded in destabilizing the Venezuelan economy and created great unrest, division and migration. The U.S. government encouraged Venezuelan opposition parties to boycott last year’s election. Now they are calling the election fraudulent, and attempting to install a little-known politician more to their liking. This is part of a dangerous game that the U.S. continues to play throughout Latin America.

President Trump’s National Security Advisor John Bolton has called Venezuela, Nicaragua and Cuba the “Troika of Tyranny,” and boasted that they have now “met their match.” Right-wing Cuban American Senator Marco Rubio of Florida, [said to be deeply involved in orchestrating this coup](#), has implied that U.S. military intervention may be next. Responding to questions about possible military intervention, President Trump says that “all options are on the table.” Trump and Vice President Mike Pence have openly encouraged the Venezuelan military to stage a coup and U.S. officials have even met with potential coup leaders. Right-wing governments in Colombia and Brazil could also possibly be involved in U.S.-coordinated military action against the democratically elected government of Venezuela.

In our Statement of Purpose, Veterans For Peace promises to “restrain our governments from intervening, overtly and covertly, in the internal affairs of other nations.” We call on our members in over 100 U.S. cities and internationally, to make their voices heard. We must do all we can to prevent a bloody civil war from taking a huge toll on the Venezuelan people, and the peace-loving people of the hemisphere.

Call your political representatives, write letters to the editors, protest in the streets, resist yet another blow against democracy and human rights in this hemisphere and the world.

For more historical context details about the current situation in Venezuela, please read this [Open Letter](#) signed by 70 academics, Latin America experts and activists, including Veterans For Peace Advisory Board members, Medea Benjamin and Phyllis Bennis.

<https://www.commondreams.org/news/2019/01/24/open-letter-over-70-scholars-and-experts-condemns-us-backed-coup-attempt-venezuela>

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Open Letter by Over 70 Scholars and Experts Condemns US-Backed Coup Attempt in Venezuela

"For the sake of the Venezuelan people, the region, and for the principle of national sovereignty, these international actors should instead support negotiations between the Venezuelan government and its opponents."

By Common Dreams staff

As many American lawmakers, pundits, and advocacy groups [remain conspicuously silent](#) in response to U.S. President Donald Trump's [decision to formally recognize](#) Venezuela's opposition leader as the "interim president"— a move that was denounced as open support for an attempted coup d'état — renowned linguist Noam Chomsky, filmmaker Boots Riley, and over 70 other academics and experts [issued an open letter](#) on Thursday calling on the Trump administration to "cease interfering in Venezuela's internal politics."

**"The U.S. and its allies must
cease encouraging violence
by pushing for violent,
extralegal regime change."
— Open Letter**

"Actions by the Trump administration and its allies in the hemisphere are almost certain to make the situation in Venezuela worse, leading to unnecessary human suffering, violence, and instability," the letter reads. "The U.S. and its allies must cease encouraging violence by pushing for violent, extralegal regime change. If the Trump administration and its allies continue to pursue their reckless course in Venezuela, the most likely result will be bloodshed, chaos, and instability."

Highlighting the harm American sanctions have inflicted upon the Venezuelan economy and people, the letter goes on to denounce the White House's "aggressive" actions and rhetoric against Venezuela's government, arguing that peaceful talks are the only way forward.

"In such situations, the only solution is a negotiated settlement, as has happened in the past in Latin American countries when politically polarized societies were unable to resolve their differences through elections," the letter reads. "For the sake of the Venezuelan people, the region, and for the principle of national sovereignty, these international actors should instead support negotiations between the Venezuelan government and its opponents that will allow the country to finally emerge from its political and economic crisis."

The full Open Letter

The United States government must cease interfering in Venezuela's internal politics, especially for the purpose of overthrowing the country's government. Actions by the Trump administration and its allies in the hemisphere are almost certain to make the

situation in Venezuela worse, leading to unnecessary human suffering, violence, and instability.

Venezuela's political polarization is not new; the country has long been divided along racial and socioeconomic lines. But the polarization has deepened in recent years. This is partly due to US support for an opposition strategy aimed at removing the government of Nicolás Maduro through extra-electoral means. While the opposition has been divided on this strategy, US support has backed hardline opposition sectors in their goal of ousting the Maduro government through often violent protests, a military coup d'état, or other avenues that sidestep the ballot box.

Under the Trump administration, aggressive rhetoric against the Venezuelan government has ratcheted up to a more extreme and threatening level, with Trump administration officials *talking* of "military action" and condemning Venezuela, along with Cuba and Nicaragua, as part of a "*troika of tyranny*." Problems resulting from Venezuelan government policy have been *worsened* by US economic sanctions, *illegal* under the Organization of American States and the United Nations — as well as US law and other international treaties and conventions. These sanctions have cut off the means by which the Venezuelan government could escape from its economic recession, while causing a dramatic *falloff* in oil production and worsening the economic crisis, and causing many people to die because they can't get access to life-saving medicines. Meanwhile, the US and other governments continue to blame the Venezuelan government — solely — for the economic damage, even that caused by the US sanctions.

Now the US and its allies, including OAS Secretary General Luis Almagro and Brazil's far-right president, Jair Bolsonaro, have pushed Venezuela to the precipice. By recognizing National Assembly President Juan Guaido as the new president of Venezuela — something illegal under *the OAS Charter* — the Trump administration has sharply accelerated Venezuela's political crisis in the hopes of dividing the Venezuelan military and further polarizing the populace, forcing them to choose sides. The obvious, and *sometimes stated* goal, is to force Maduro out via a coup d'état.

The reality is that despite hyperinflation, shortages, and a deep depression, Venezuela remains a politically polarized country. The US and its allies must cease encouraging violence by pushing for violent, extralegal regime change. If the Trump administration and its allies continue to pursue their reckless course in Venezuela, the most likely result will be bloodshed, chaos, and instability. The US should have learned something from its regime change ventures in Iraq, Syria, Libya, and its long, violent history of sponsoring regime change in Latin America.

Neither side in Venezuela can simply vanquish the other. The military, for example, has at least 235,000 frontline members, and there are at least 1.6 million in militias. Many of these people will fight, not only on the basis of a belief in national sovereignty that is widely held in Latin America — in the face of what increasingly appears to be a US-led intervention — but also to protect themselves from likely repression if the opposition topples the government by force.

In such situations, the only solution is a negotiated settlement, as has happened in the past in Latin American countries when politically polarized societies were unable

to resolve their differences through elections. There have been efforts, such as [those led by the Vatican](#) in the fall of 2016, that had potential, but they received no support from Washington and its allies who favored regime change. This strategy must change if there is to be any viable solution to the ongoing crisis in Venezuela.

For the sake of the Venezuelan people, the region, and for the principle of national sovereignty, these international actors should instead support negotiations between the Venezuelan government and its opponents that will allow the country to finally emerge from its political and economic crisis.

Signed:

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Alfred de Zayas, former UN Independent Expert on the Promotion of a Democratic and Equitable International Order and only UN rapporteur to have visited Venezuela in 21 years

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John Pilger, Journalist & Film-Maker

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